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REVIEW OF THE ALBUM

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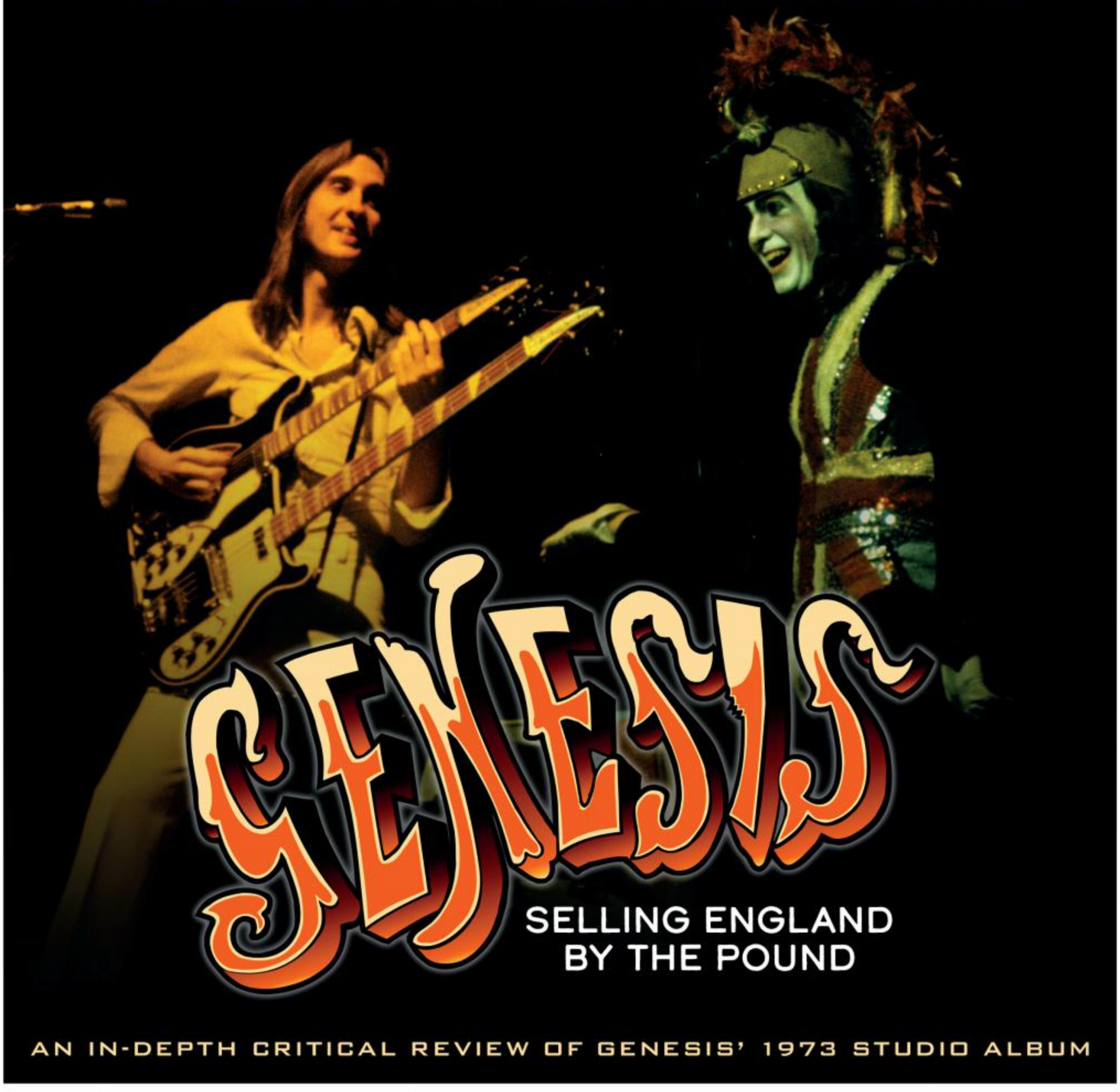
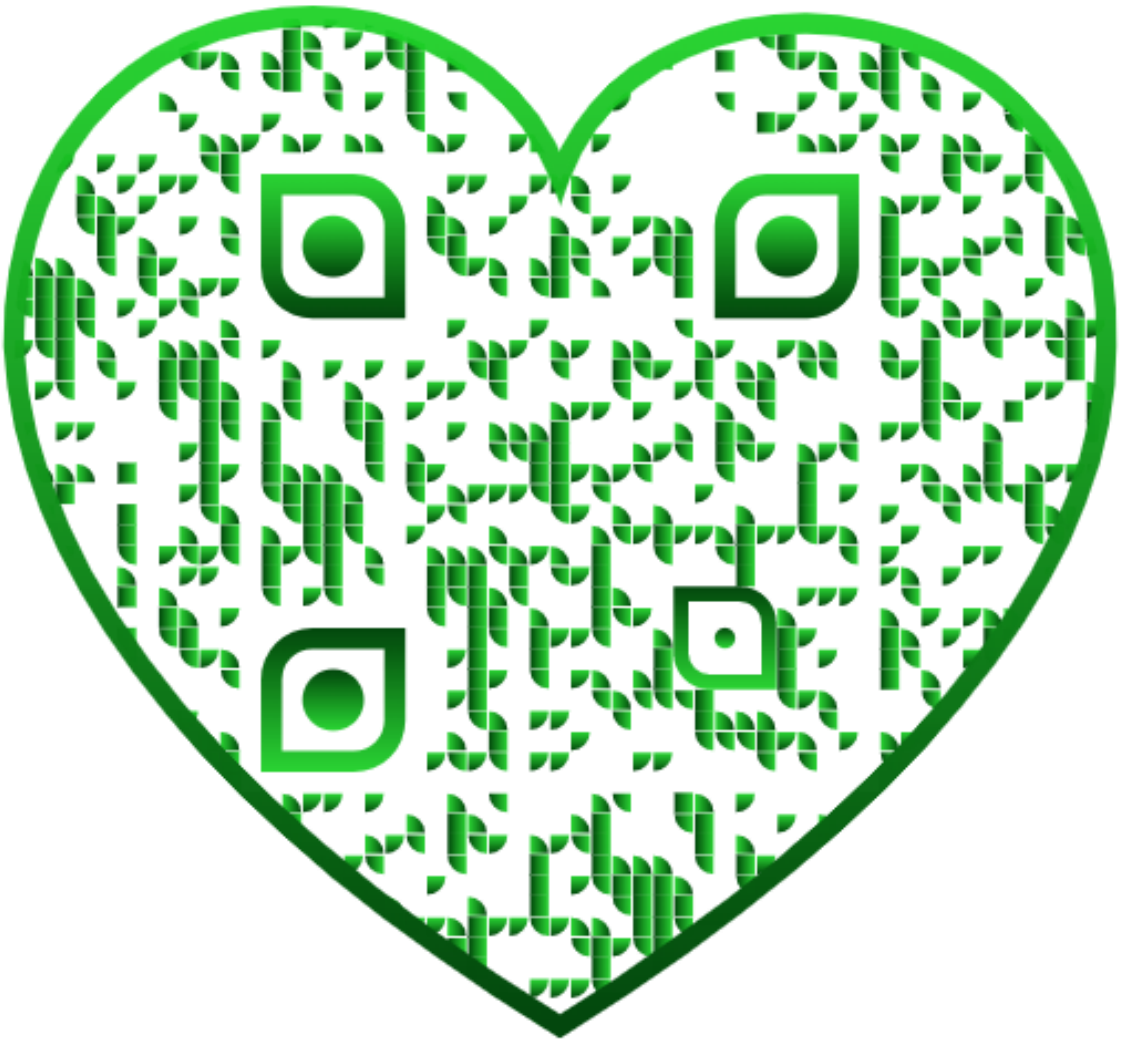
THE INSIDE STORY OF ROCK'S GREATEST NAMES



GENESIS

SELLING ENGLAND
BY THE POUND

AN IN-DEPTH CRITICAL REVIEW OF GENESIS' 1973 STUDIO ALBUM



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SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

By the time of the release of *Selling England by the Pound*, Genesis were seen as rapidly rising stars of the UK music scene and not surprisingly a great deal of interest centred on the flamboyant front man who was fast becoming regarded as a rock icon to match Bowie or Bolan. This infamy had propelled the album Foxtrot into the public eye, and the band were now seeking to capitalise on their new-found popularity by releasing a new studio album they called *Selling England by the Pound*.

The album was not written in a single session or location, and Banks recalled the group had some difficulty in coming up with musical ideas. The extra time that Charisma allowed caused the band to adopt a more relaxed pace of working at first, which included periods of unproductive work, such as the constant reworking of ideas to the point where they no longer worked or those that led them back to where they started. The first sessions took place in what reporter Jerry Gilbert described as 'a rambling old stately home' in Chessington, Kingston upon Thames, where the group practising in the living room caused the neighbours to complain about the noise and impose a curfew. Phil Collins did not remember the album being particularly difficult to put together, but said the Chessington sessions was where the basis of *The Cinema Show* was put together. He had been listening to the jazz fusion group Mahavishnu Orchestra which influenced him to play more complicated time signatures on the drums for *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* and other parts on the album. Rehearsals then moved to London in a space beneath the Una Billings School of Dance in Shepherd's Bush, during which *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* was developed further. Hackett had not contributed a great deal of material to the group at this point, which was made difficult by the breakdown of his first marriage going on around the same time. Rather than pitch whole songs he instead devised guitar licks, all of which were used, and gave the album a jazz fusion feel that still remained very English in its sound.

Two sections that were brought into the sessions from the start were a simple guitar riff that Hackett had been playing that the band liked and wanted to develop further and became *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*, and three sections from Banks that he initially thought were for different songs but were instead used in the final arrangement of *Firth of Fifth*. The third section developed early on became the opening of *The Battle of Epping Forest*, and the band repeatedly performed these three pieces daily for a short while which

Banks thought resulted in the latter song being too overworked. Despite the setbacks, biographer Robin Platts wrote: 'There were enough magic moments and inspired jam sessions to produce such enduring compositions'.

One of the ideas that Gabriel wanted to convey with the album was the idea of looking at 'Englishness in a different way'. This included his suggestion of the album's title, itself a slogan adopted by the Labour Party manifesto, to ensure that the British press would not accuse the band of 'selling out' to America. Rutherford later deemed the title to be among the band's best album titles. Overall, it represented a decay of English folk culture and an increase in Americanisation. Banks said the English theme across the album was not an intentional idea at first, but it is how the songs merely ended up. Gabriel later stated that he wrote all his lyrical contributions to the album in two days.

Having rehearsed and written enough material for an album, the group entered Island Studios, London in August 1973. As with *Foxtrot*, John Burns helped with production. Burns' technical skills resulted in a good recorded sound and environment, and this motivated the group to play better and tackle more complex arrangements. Gabriel was conscious of the greater use of lengthy instrumental sections on the album which he thought presented the risk of the material becoming boring.

One Genesis member that felt the album was anything but boring was Steve Hackett, who stated, 'I would say that, for me, the most creative album that [Genesis] did was *Selling England by the Pound*. I think it showcased both the song strengths of the band and the playing talent as well. Occasionally the instruments were allowed to breathe, you know, with unaccompanied things. I think that the odd solo was too long. I think that the keyboard solo in *Cinema Show* went on interminably – on one chord, in 7/8, for ages! But apart from that I think it showcased the individual abilities pretty nicely.

Mind you, I know that Peter wasn't very pleased with that album, and I know that Phil wasn't happy with it, either. In fact, no one was happy with it, apart from me! I also prefer my guitar playing on it. In fact, I decided on that album that it was going to be more playing and less talking about it, so I just got on with the job and didn't bother to try and sell my songs to the band. I think there were some stronger solos, because you had fewer competitors in the song-writing sense. I had a more riffy kind of attitude to that album.

On the previous albums I had always gotten heavily into the lyric writing, and I decided to opt out of that role and just get on with playing. I wanted to get back into playing guitar again. Having said that, now I'm solo I'll have to be wary of overdoing the guitar; it might bore people to death. I mean, you listen to an Antony Phillips [Hackett's predecessor in Genesis] album – there's a lot of guitar work, but Jesus!'

In a piece for *NME* entitled 'Genesis: Peter Gabriel Talks' published on 13 October 1973, Barbara Charone again met with Peter Gabriel. By now Barbara was becoming a recognised champion of the band, but she was still prepared to ask awkward questions of the man who had been put on a pedestal by large sections of the music press:

'The music world rarely awakens before noon, but I met Peter Gabriel at the unlikely hour of 9.30 a.m. Genesis, having finished their *Selling England by the Pound* album, were rehearsing the new show. The man was looking weary-eyed as he ate buttered toast and sipped a coffee – the living proof that rock is all late-night rave-ups. Offstage, Gabriel is unassuming, rather slow at opening up in conversation, and a far cry from the figure who runs rampant in bizarre gear.

But anyway, what exactly have the conquerors of Epping Forest been up to in preparation for the new act? He thinks for a moment and gives with a snide smile "I've been having conversations with my mask maker. I gave him a copy of the lyrics to the new album... I've

found it helps to go over the words with him, trying to get pictures from the words, conceptions of characters.

"We also have a guy working for us on stage designs. We explain what effects we'd like, with lighting and all. On this tour we'll be using a screen for backdrop projections. All these things," he stresses, "help to create the fantasy we work under."

Character is a word that crops up often in a conversation with Gabriel. The theatrical comparison is obvious and always apparent on stage. "My part has been to conceive all the characters and masks I can from a piece. The visuals are really just an adaptation of something that's already been written, and recently I've been trying things out with new characters.

"The visuals did begin out of necessity," he agrees. "With gaps in the playing the door was left open to me. At first I used to improvise completely – which I don't do now. When the visuals work, they set up pictures in the mind. That way someone can enter the music more receptivity. But visuals can only succeed if the music is just as satisfying. It's actually a means to an end."

"The only reason we're up on a stage is to communicate to people, to entertain, and you're better able to do that with movement. So whatever we can get our hands on, we'll use." That, my friends, includes pyramids, flowers, fox masks and other image-oriented objects. Since the band is a five piece with five very separate opinions, I wondered how Gabriel convinced the others of his stage ideas. Or did he simply show up one day in his flower regalia? "Actually," says Gabriel with a smile, "that's exactly what happened." Gabriel believes that one day film, music and theatre will merge. Already they're moving closer together in a working partnership, and he offers the Red Buddha Theatre as proof. Genesis, who incorporate a bit of several mediums in their stage show, hope to one day operate from their own inflatable theatre. Says Gabriel: "In this portable theatre there'd be various textures. At the theatre's entrance you'd go through a selection of things happening –which would set your mind

thinking in a fantasy situation. The whole experience wouldn't relate to anything you've known before. The fantasy would stay with the audience from the moment they entered the theatre until they went home. During the entire two or three hours of the show a complete fantasy would be going on all around. Then people could relate all the time, being all insular and vulnerable."

Genesis obviously differ from the dressed-up twelve-bar that most bands unravel. And because of these very differences, the band have been slated over their motives. Gabriel says: "I think some people have a rip-off concept of us, which goes something like this: they see us as a band who were sitting around doing nothing, and who looked at who was pulling in the money in the music market, so they think we ripped off Yes's music, Alice Cooper's visuals, and we came up with Genesis.

"And of course," Gabriel both laughs and sighs, "that's how it happened".

"And just because I was dressing up, people assumed I was imitating Bowie. But the thing is, the characters I play are things talked about in the lyrics, and they do occur. Bowie's a great writer, but I don't always think his costumes are relevant to his music.

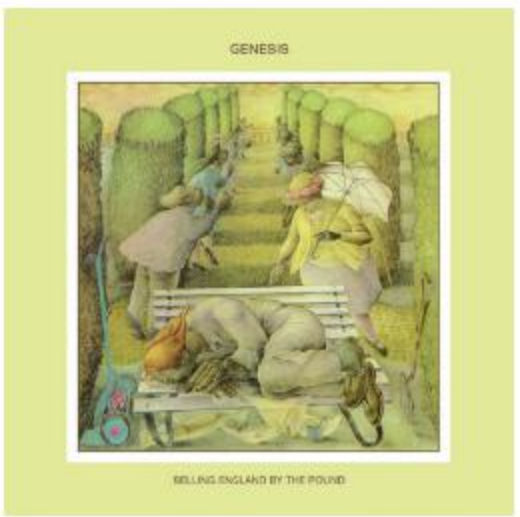
"Visuals should provide some images that sink into the music, so if you're listening at home you've still got traces of the characters floating around." Onstage, there's something almost hypnotic in the way Peter Gabriel addresses an audience. Does he believe Genesis make people feel uncomfortable? "Great if we do... I like to disturb the audience a bit and then bring them into our world."

With two absolutely brilliant albums behind them Genesis were on a roll. The creative energy in the band was so great that by October 1973, only twelve months after *Foxtrot*, a brand new album was ready to be released. In many respects it outshone it's illustrious predecessors. *Selling England by the Pound* was undoubtedly a Genesis masterpiece and to cap it all there was even a hit single... at last.'

A track-by-track review of

SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

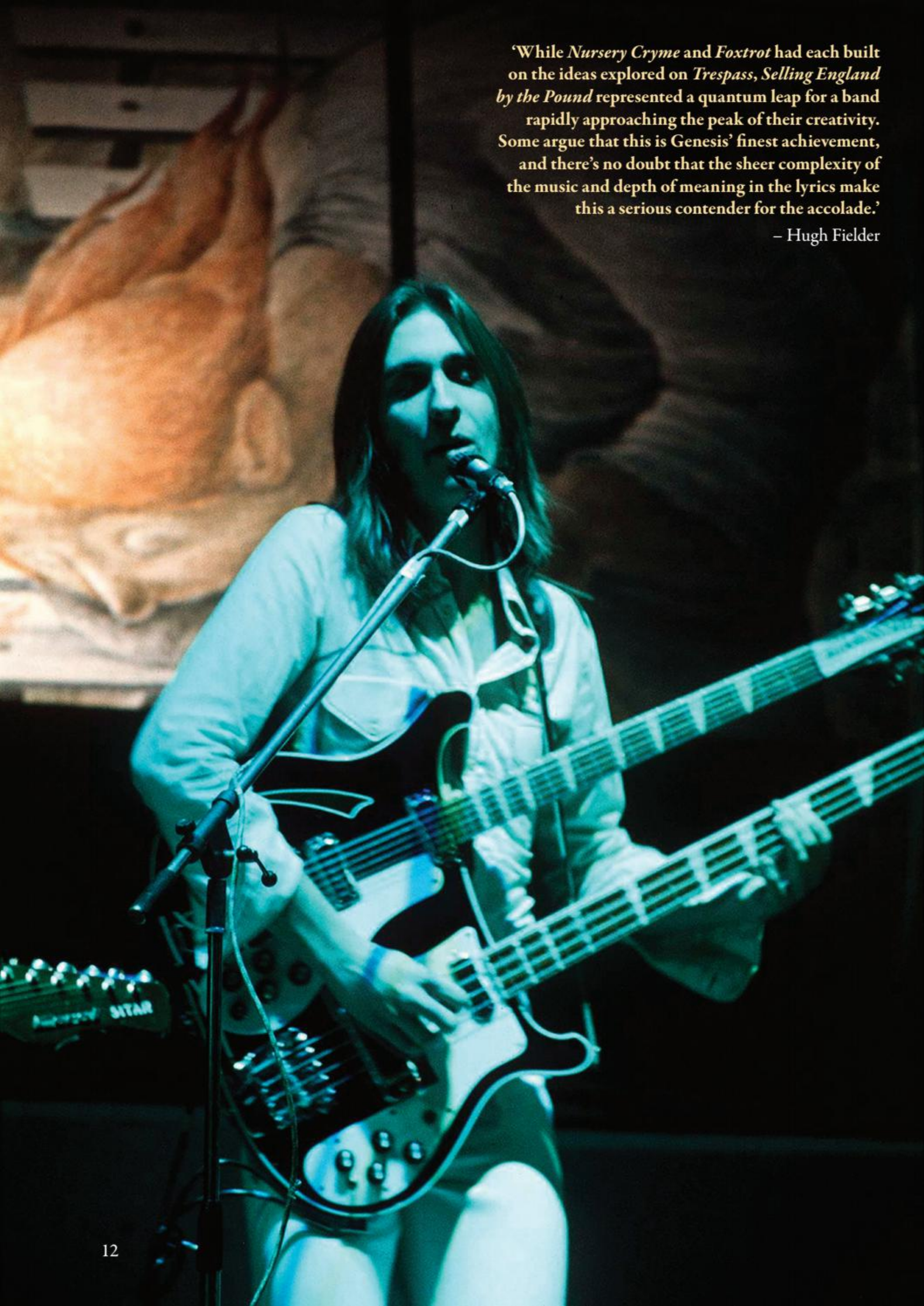
by Hugh Fielder & Friends



Hugh Fielder (Esteemed Rock Journalist and Author): While *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot* had each built on the ideas explored on *Trespass*, *Selling England by the Pound* represented a quantum leap for a band rapidly approaching the peak of their creativity. Some argue that this is Genesis' finest achievement, and there's no doubt that the sheer complexity of the music and depth of meaning in the lyrics make this a serious contender for the accolade.

Although this is a not a concept album in the normally accepted sense, much of its lyrical content can be seen as a commentary on Britain in the early 1970s, a 'state of the nation' report which concluded that this was a country in terminal decline. For those who lived through the period, this will probably come as no real surprise – after all, this was a time of serious industrial unrest, economic uncertainty, and the 'three-day week'. The colour and energy of the 1960s had faded to a clinging grey lethargy and, for most people, the future looked anything but bright.

For Genesis, though, things were looking very good indeed – *Foxtrot* had been the first of their albums to chart in the UK, and the live album which followed had given them their first Top 10 entry. *Selling England by the Pound* eclipsed both, spending twenty-one weeks in the UK album chart and reaching No. 3. Its success was



'While *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot* had each built on the ideas explored on *Trespass*, *Selling England by the Pound* represented a quantum leap for a band rapidly approaching the peak of their creativity. Some argue that this is Genesis' finest achievement, and there's no doubt that the sheer complexity of the music and depth of meaning in the lyrics make this a serious contender for the accolade.'

– Hugh Fielder

thoroughly deserved – as this was an accomplished recording in every respect – musically and lyrically brilliantly written, with a much warmer production than their earlier releases resulting in a totally different, more mature, ambience.

There was a different feel to the album even before the needle hit the vinyl. This was the first Genesis studio album since their debut not to come in a gatefold sleeve. Its simple, uncluttered cover bore the band's name and the album's title in a plain typeface, eschewing the familiar Genesis logo that had appeared on the previous three releases. After using Paul Whitehead's artwork on *Trespass*, *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot*, this time the band chose a rather curious naïve painting by Betty Swanwick RA, the inspiration for the album's surprise hit single *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*.

Veering between Arthurian legend, Ealing comedy and medieval minstrelsy, *Selling England by the Pound* gently and without cloying sentimentality mourns the passing of a nation, whilst pulling no punches in pinpointing commercialism, Americanisation and the gradual erosion of long-standing values as the greatest threats to the English way of life.

Michael Heatley (Journalist and Biographical Author): *Selling England by the Pound* I think fans remember as really the peak of Steve Hackett's contribution to the band. He had come in to the band as an outsider after *Trespass* and he had, like Phil Collins, had to get over the fact that he wasn't a Charterhouse pupil, he wasn't an old boy, he was an outsider. I think when this album started he was actually wondering whether he was going to stay with the band, I think he asked them if they felt his contribution was sufficient and they of course said 'Yes, stay with it and stick with it, we'll look at your ideas maybe more than we have done.' Really his contributions to *Selling England by the Pound* were, for fans, the culmination of a growing process and I think here they felt they might have the axe hero that they had always wanted.

It was an album that took its cues in some ways from the cover, which was different, it wasn't a Whitehead cover like the previous covers had been, it took its cues in a different way and it certainly did succeed on many, many levels.

Rob Corich (Author, Engineer and Record Producer): I think *Selling England by the Pound* is the best album Genesis have ever done, just the best. I mean musically it was certainly a carry on from *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot,* but I think the songs were more cleverly integrated and it wasn't that it was a concept album just that they seemed to follow on very well. That's as much as arranging the tracks in order, finding your track-listing when you're first putting the album together, something as simple as that can actually make the difference between a great album and an extremely good album and I think they got it right with this one. You have songs like *The Battle of Epping Forest* and *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight*, classic stuff. It is a very, very good album – I think one of the best albums of the 1970s.

Chris Welch (Celebrated Music Journalist, Critic and Author): It was a crucially important step forward for Genesis. One interesting point is that right away as soon as you listen to it comparing it to previous albums you can actually hear Peter Gabriel's vocals coming through loud and clear. There was much better production and a much better sound quality, but oddly enough despite that they had progressed in the studio in that sense, so it was technically a more proficient album but somehow lacking in some of the magic of *Foxtrot* or *Trespass* or *Nursery Cryme.* They had to move on of course, but despite the fact that they had set piece arrangements going on like *The Cinema Show,* it didn't quite have the quality of genius that the early albums had. Of course the important aspect of *Selling England by the Pound* was that they had their first hit single with *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe).*

Dancing With the Moonlit Knight

Dancing With the Moonlit Knight evolved from a number of short piano pieces composed by Gabriel, which were combined with some of Hackett's guitar figures to make up the track. Gabriel added English-themed lyrics to counter the impression from the music press that Genesis were trying too hard to appeal to the American audience, including references to Green Shield Stamps. Banks had upgraded to a new model of Mellotron and used the choir sound on the track. The track ends with a series of twelve-string guitar figures that were originally supposed to segue into *The Cinema Show* to make a piece around twenty minutes in length, but this idea was dropped as the result was too comparable to the twenty-three minute *Supper's Ready* on *Foxtrot*. Its original working title was *Disney*. Rutherford thought the song's opening provided a good start to the album, but felt less enthusiastic towards it overall, calling it 'a bit busy'.

Live, Peter Gabriel often introduced *The Moonlit Knight* with bizarre little prefaces such as 'I am in the English Channel, it is cold, it is exceedingly wet, I am the voice of Britain before the Daily Express... My name is Britannia, this is my song, it is called *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight*.'

Hugh Fielder: A brilliant opener, *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* starts with an unaccompanied Peter Gabriel asking the question that sets the tone for much of what follows. 'Can you tell me where my country lies?' he pleads – and, as the instrumental backing builds up momentum behind his words, we are taken on a guided tour of some of the social changes beginning to make their mark on Britain in the early 1970s.

There are passing references to the rise of fast food ('Chewing through your Wimpy dreams... digesting England by the pound') and the introduction of credit cards – then a novel concept promising to fulfil consumerist dreams, these days a serious problem for millions caught up in overwhelming debt. A romantic notion of

'Englishness' is introduced via oblique references to Arthur and the story of the Holy Grail, but the listener is brought back to the present by a neat juxtaposition of Arthurian legend (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) and the then-ubiquitous Green Shield stamp scheme – 'Knights of the Green Shield stamp and shout.'

This lyrical complexity is matched by the musical setting, featuring some inspired guitar-work from Steve Hackett whose contributions to this album are outstanding throughout. It can be argued that *Selling England by the Pound* marks the high point of his career with the band, as he alternately steps forward for another wonderfully economic solo or expertly complements Tony Banks' keyboard arrangements. His presence is sometimes difficult to detect, but its impact is undeniable.

The themes explored here surface in different forms throughout the album, but the die is most emphatically cast by this excellent opening shot.

Rob Corich: It's probably the best song that Genesis has ever recorded that could potentially be played on radio. I mean it's long, it's still six or seven minutes, which is borderline for radio play but it's a great live track. It's great if you ever heard it on the radio, but it wasn't overly long, so I don't think people ever lost interest in it. The dynamics of the song were almost second to none with anything Genesis had ever done before and I think anything that Genesis tried to follow it up with.

Iain Jennings (Professional Rock Keyboardist): *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* is in C-sharp-minor and for me the special part of the song is really the Steve Hackett guitar riff, it's so simple but it's so provocative and it encapsulates what the song is about really.

I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)

I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe) came out of a jam session

by the group around one of Hackett's guitar riffs. He had presented the riff to the group previously, but it had been rejected because it sounded too much like the Beatles. Gilbert described an early listening of the song as 'Hints of quaint English romanticism' that, according to Gabriel, was initially intended to have more of a folk-oriented melody. The percussion sounds heard at the beginning are Gabriel playing with a talking drum that Burns had purchased from Nigeria. It was released as a single from the album, which became the first of the group's to chart in the UK.

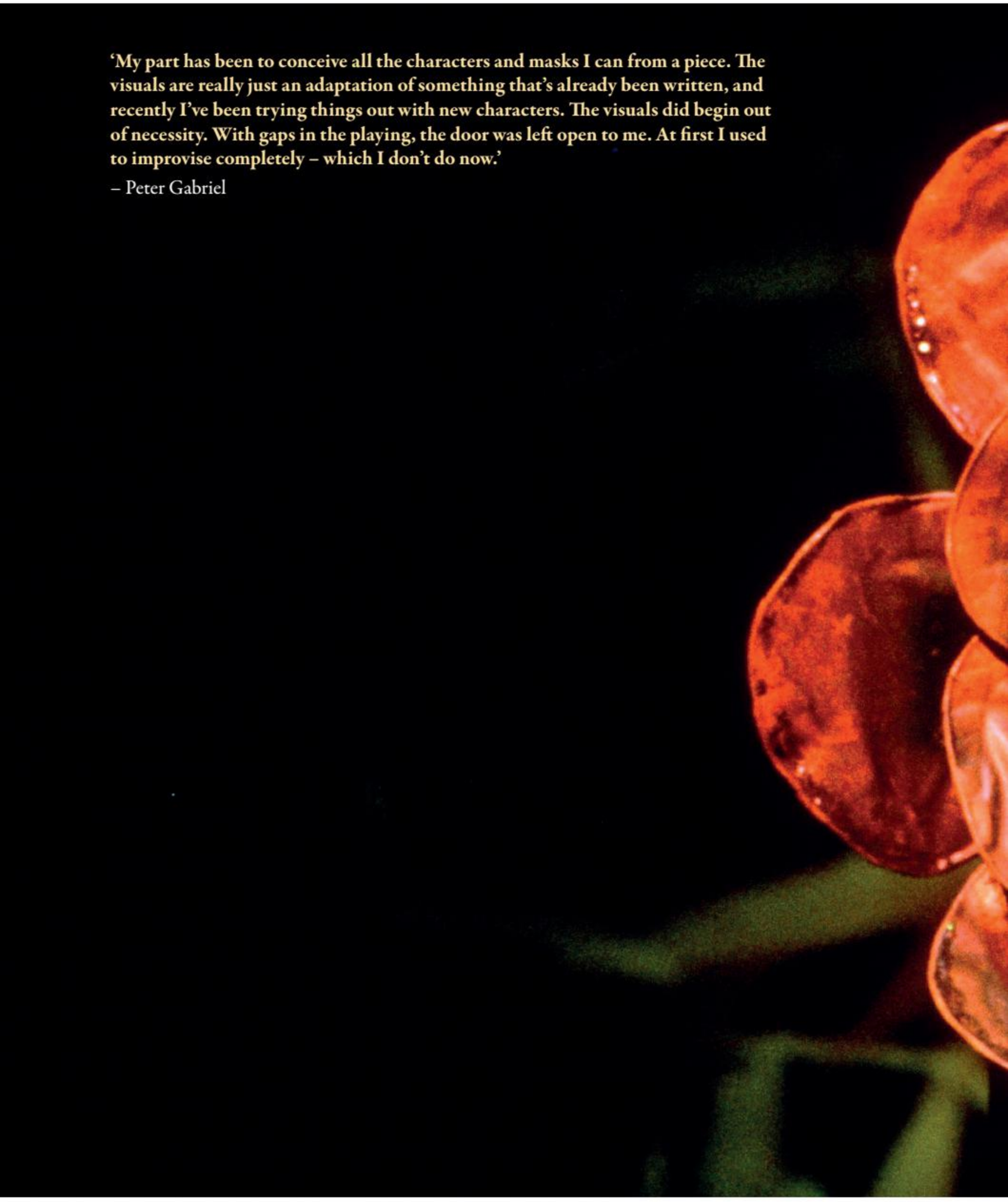
Hugh Fielder: Perversely, the most 'progressive' Genesis album to date provided the band with its first hit single, an edited version of the track inspired by the painting which adorned its cover. Spending a total of seven weeks in the Top 50, and peaking at No. 21, *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* was probably helped in its chart achievement by the presence of a non-album B-side, the seven-and-a-half minute *Twilight Alehouse*.

On one level, this is a simple song telling the story of a simple man whose life is dedicated to cutting grass, but in the context of the album wider social issues are implied. The English class system and the importance of 'knowing one's place' are strongly reflected in the lyrics, especially the chorus. The man appears to be a gardener at a substantial residence, and to have been saved from the shortcomings of the British education system by a rich benefactor ('had to thank old Miss Mort for schooling a failure'). This could account for the song's curious subtitle, which may be an oblique reference to the protagonist indulging a secret passion for dressing in his mistress' clothes whenever the chance arises...

The whirring sound that starts and ends the track was apparently achieved by playing the same chord on two different keyboards (electric piano and organ) which were slightly out of tune with each other. The resultant 'beating' sound provided a neat way to represent a lawnmower for the opening and closing of the piece.

'My part has been to conceive all the characters and masks I can from a piece. The visuals are really just an adaptation of something that's already been written, and recently I've been trying things out with new characters. The visuals did begin out of necessity. With gaps in the playing, the door was left open to me. At first I used to improvise completely – which I don't do now.'

– Peter Gabriel



Michael Heatley: *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* could have been a bigger single if Genesis had actually appeared on *Top of the Pops* but they never did. Nobody is quite sure if it's because they refused (which I think they like to tell people they did) or whether they just couldn't fit it in to their touring commitments. It was a song that had the slightly off kilter appeal that maybe something that Jethro Tull might have done, *Living in the Past*, the same hop skip and a jump as Jethro Tull had. It was a song that I think succeeded as a single, but that the fans could still like; you have to remember that Genesis fans were album buyers, the fans, they weren't people who bought seven-inch singles by The Sweets or Gary Glitter. In many ways perhaps going on *Top of the Pops* would have been a retrograde step for Genesis, because they would have risked alienating the fans that stuck with them from the beginning. Of course when Phil Collins took over as the singer they would be more or less fixtures on *Top of the Pops*, but that was another chapter to come. Yet it was from this point on that Genesis could certainly claim to be a singles band as well as an albums band.

Rob Corich: *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* was a very clever ditty of a single almost. It was typical of Genesis in many ways with the vocal and the lyrics and the way they put it together musically. Personally it's not my favourite on the album, but I can see why they chose it as a single and I think it was a very, very good choice of a single, and it works well on the album.

Hugh Fielder: That song emerged from jamming around on a rather pop-y riff that I think had been hanging around, but suddenly the right kind of lyrics began to appear. A couple of ideas sprang from the original riff and they just let it run and develop by itself. The lyrics have a nice quirky touch to them, but it has quite a pop sensibility that ironically is something that Genesis seemed to battle against half the time; it was almost like they didn't want to have a pop hit – it was

almost beneath them. Despite their better judgment as it were, this song worked as a pop song, it got to just outside the Top 20.

Firth of Fifth

Banks wrote most of *Firth of Fifth* on his own, and had presented it to the group for *Foxtrot*, but it was rejected. He reworked some sections of the song for *Selling England by the Pound*, where it drew a more positive reception. The track opens with a solo piece for piano, that is repeated by the band later in the song. Banks recalled the difficulty to remove the noise created by the piano pedal in the studio, so he played the passage without it, which he found difficult. Hackett took one of Banks' piano figures and rearranged it as a guitar solo, which dominates the latter part of the track. Banks later deemed the lyrics, to which he contributed with assistance from Rutherford, as one of the worst he had worked on. He had aimed to follow 'the idea of a river and then I got a bit caught up in the cosmos and I don't quite know where I ended up'.

Hugh Fielder: Quite simply a masterpiece, *Firth of Fifth* has to rank amongst the best-ever examples of progressive rock writing. The symphonic opening, executed brilliantly by Tony Banks on acoustic piano, is followed by a short vocal section with the whole band backing Peter Gabriel, but the heart of the song is in the lengthy instrumental section that follows.

Building from a meditative flute solo over an understated bass and piano backing, and moving on to an expansion of the opening theme executed on multi-layered synthesisers, it eventually arrives at another of Steve Hackett's spine-tingling guitar solos. This is surely the standard by which his work should be judged. Emotionally charged and brilliantly economic, this is an outstanding moment among many, an object lesson in pure, uncluttered, unpretentious lead guitar.

Throughout, Mike Rutherford and Phil Collins hold things together brilliantly, Rutherford's bass line woven almost

imperceptibly through the song's rich tapestry, Collins' percussion work displaying all the subtlety and skill that were his hallmark during this period of the band's history. *Firth of Fifth* remained a live favourite for some years afterwards, and single-handedly justifies the presence of this album in any self-respecting progressive rock collection.

More Fool Me

More Fool Me is the second of two songs, the other being *For Absent Friends* from *Nursery Cryme*, to feature Collins on lead vocals before he became the band's lead singer in 1975. Uncharacteristically for the group's output at the time, the song was a tender, romantic ballad. It was written quickly by Collins and Rutherford while sitting on the steps outside the recording studio. Gabriel considered the pair's contributions 'quite a breakthrough'.

Hugh Fielder: The track everyone loves to hate... This was Phil Collins' lead vocal debut with Genesis, although no-one could have guessed at the time that this would become a permanent arrangement less than three years later.

More Fool Me is a simple ballad, written by Collins and Mike Rutherford. Lyrically straightforward, the sense of loss and emptiness it imparts are generally in keeping with the tone of the album, although its concentration on a personal relationship makes it very much odd man out.

This is little more than a sketch in comparison with the remainder of the material on the set, but its brief doesn't pretend to be anything more than it is, and it's hard to see why it provokes such hatred even amongst those for whom the post-Gabriel Genesis remains an unpalatable dish.

The Battle of Epping Forest

The Battle of Epping Forest was inspired by a news story that Gabriel

had read several years previously about the territorial battles by two rival gangs in the East End of London that would fight in Epping Forest. He placed an advertisement in *The Times* and looked through library archives in attempt to find more about the story, but was unable to find any further information, so he created his own fictional characters, including 'Liquid Len', 'Harold Demure' and 'The Bethnal Green Butcher'. Upon hearing a rehearsal take of the song in July 1973, Chris Welch wrote: '*The Battle* has a catchy march theme with typical Genesis drum and bass lines, clean and precise'. The lyrics have since been praised for their humour and wit, but the band later said they did not gel well with the music and made the piece complicated for the sake of being so. Gabriel thought its ending, which had each gang settling the issue over the toss of a coin, tied up the story well but is too much of an anti-climax.

Hugh Fielder: After *More Fool Me*, this is the track which most sharply divides Genesis fans. *The Battle of Epping Forest* is seen by some as the zenith of Peter Gabriel's comic-opera style of social commentary, a Genesis tradition dating from *Harold the Barrel* and *The Return of the Giant Hogweed* on *Nursery Cryme*, and continued in a more muted form by *Get 'Em Out By Friday* on *Foxtrot*. Others however, remain unimpressed, dismissing it as ridiculously self-indulgent eccentricity...

Whichever view you take, this is an imposing piece clocking in at almost twelve minutes, just edging out *The Cinema Show* as the longest track on the album. It's another example of Gabriel's sharp social observation, here presented in a manner that marries his eye for detail with the surrealistic vision of Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear; a quintessentially English style entirely in keeping with the overall tenor of the album. The apparently narrow subject-matter doesn't limit Gabriel's inventiveness one iota, and this is another piece littered with lyrical ambiguity concerning social status, local politics and moral values.

A wide variety of musical settings is used to flesh out the many characters, although the track's critics claim this piecemeal approach leads only to a lack of cohesion. It is perhaps interesting to note that *Epping Forest* divided opinion within the band almost as much as among the fans.

After the Ordeal

After the Ordeal is an instrumental written by Hackett; the song originated as more of an electric piece but neither he nor the other band members could adapt it into something that they felt worked, so it was transformed with an acoustic introduction with an electric guitar solo to finish. Hackett mentioned in a homemade video capsule that this was the first Genesis track on which he ever used a nylon guitar. Banks and Gabriel did not want to include the song on the album, but Hackett insisted it should be kept; Banks expressed little interest in its 'pseudo classical' style. It was ultimately left on after Gabriel and Banks argued about the length of *The Cinema Show*, which meant everything was included as a compromise. Banks later said the compromise led to the album overrunning its desirable length on vinyl, resulting in a sound quality he thought came out as 'pretty rough'.

Hugh Fielder: The only instrumental offering on the album, this starts with a relatively simple opening section that neatly juxtaposes Steve Hackett's acoustic guitar with Tony Banks' grand piano. The mood changes midway through as the tempo is slowed down and Hackett switches to multi-tracked electric guitar, followed by the gradual introduction of subtle keyboard motifs and the odd flourish from Peter Gabriel's flute, which all combines to create a soothing, pastoral ambience entirely suited to its title.

Taken on its own, this is a relatively lightweight piece, eminently pleasant but musically unadventurous. Put in the context of the album it achieves a far greater importance, providing the perfect

bridge between the frantic *The Battle of Epping Forest* and the idyllic quality of *The Cinema Show*.

The Cinema Show

The Cinema Show is divided into two sections. The first section is a twelve-string guitar-based piece, featuring vocal harmonies between Gabriel and Collins, as well as a short flute and oboe solo. The song concludes with a four-and-a-half-minute keyboard solo on the ARP Pro Soloist, with Rutherford and Collins playing a rhythm in a 7/8 time signature. The lyrics, written by Banks and Rutherford, draw much of their inspiration from the T. S. Eliot poem *The Waste Land*.

Hugh Fielder: A variety of musical themes expertly assembled into a brilliantly cohesive whole, this is another outstanding example of Tony Banks' art: littered with complex time signatures, skilfully embellished with a wide variety of keyboard textures, and never less than absorbing throughout its eleven-minute duration.

Despite its complex nature, *The Cinema Show* retains a curiously pastoral ambience, even during the lengthy instrumental passages that give Banks his chance to stretch out and explore the possibilities offered by the recent advances in keyboard technology. His enormous skill in utilising these musical resources can be judged in terms of the sheer subtlety of this work – despite his pre-eminence throughout the piece, his efforts are never overbearing and there is not a single second of self-indulgence in any of his solos.

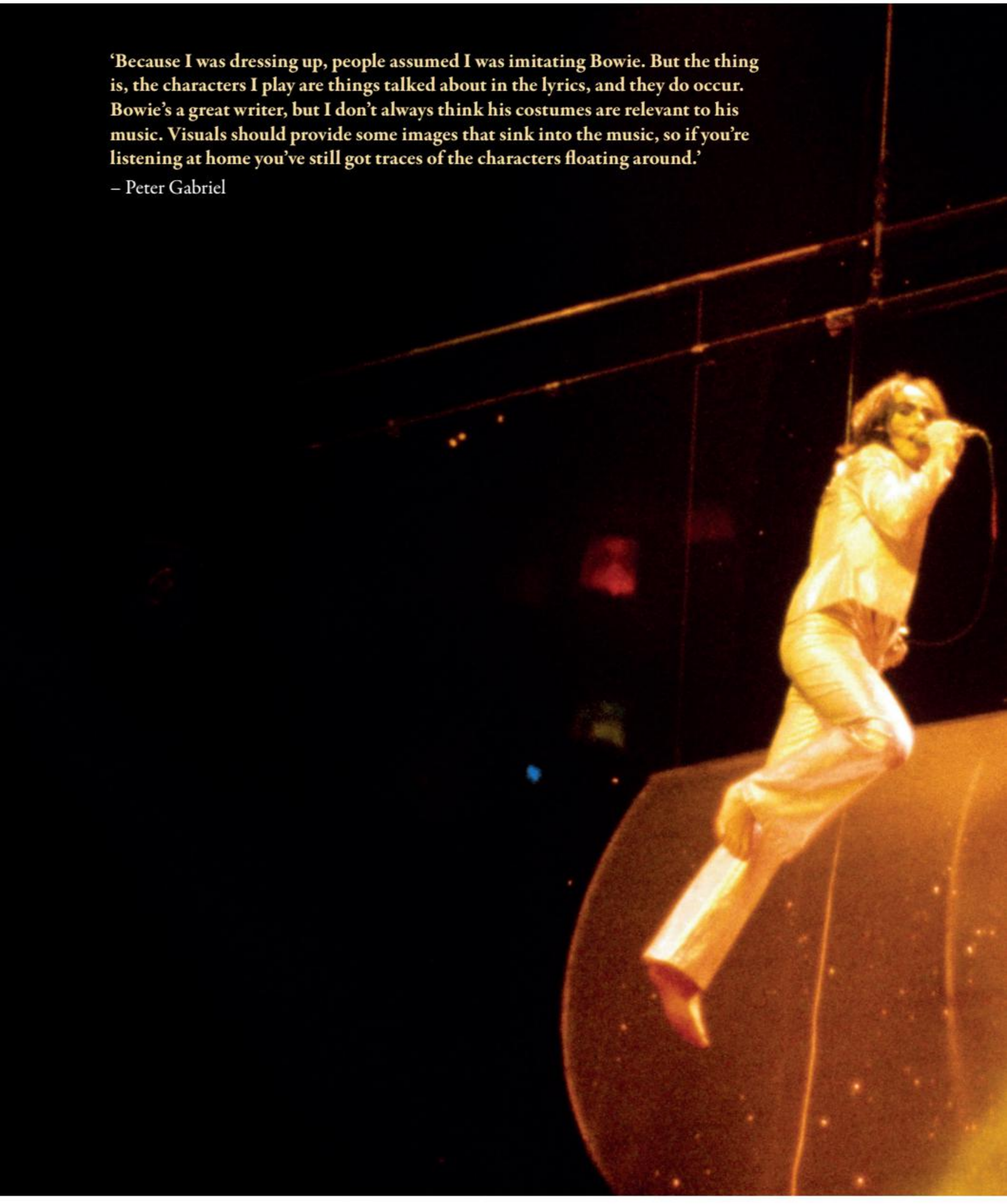
Another master class in progressive rock writing and playing, *The Cinema Show* neatly segues into the album's final cut, bringing the listener full-circle...

Aisle of Plenty

The album closes with a segue from the end of *The Cinema Show* into *Aisle of Plenty*, a reprise of *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* which gives the album a book-end effect. The track uses word play such as

‘Because I was dressing up, people assumed I was imitating Bowie. But the thing is, the characters I play are things talked about in the lyrics, and they do occur. Bowie’s a great writer, but I don’t always think his costumes are relevant to his music. Visuals should provide some images that sink into the music, so if you’re listening at home you’ve still got traces of the characters floating around.’

– Peter Gabriel



'Easy, love there's the safe way home' and 'Thankful for her fine fair discount, Tess co-operates', referring to British supermarkets.

Hugh Fielder: Utilising elements of the album's opening track, *Aisle of Plenty* re-examines the changes being wrought on Britain by consumerism, represented here by the supermarkets that posed a growing threat to this 'nation of shopkeepers' in the early 1970's. The names of the then major players – Fine Fare, Safeway, Tesco and the Co-Op – are introduced via some excruciating wordplay, before a puzzling one-line reference to deadly nightshade.

Perhaps this reference makes an analogy between the poisonous nature of the plant and the insidious nature of the social changes described earlier, or it may be a political metaphor alluding to the association in English literature between deadly nightshade and treachery. Either way, this seemingly throwaway line seems brilliantly to evoke the theme of the whole album, a lament for a way of life slowly being lost forever.

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The stalwart Barbara Charone was understandably jubilant over the release of another truly great album by Genesis and her review of *Selling England by the Pound* published in *NME*, 29 September 1973 was suitably upbeat almost to the point of triumphalism:

'Genesis fans unite, stand proud and be counted; get ready to say "I told you so" to all those people who have been doubting your praise of the band. *Selling England by the Pound* is the band's best, most adventurous album to date. There comes a time in every band's career when everything comes together, all the ideas, the playing, everything the group has been trying to put across. And that's the case with this album.

There's not a half finished idea here, every track is worked out down to the last drum roll. There's so much subtlety that numerous

listenings continue to reveal new found secrets. *Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* begins the album as Peter Gabriel sings a folky lament acapella. A bit medieval, the piece features laid back guitar wandering and majestic melody lines. Even on the first track, a difference is apparent. For starters, Tony Banks is playing more piano than organ; this is coupled with Gabriel's emotive singing. Steve Hackett's whining guitar and the all powerful rhythm section of Michael Rutherford and Phil Collins. Yes. Genesis sound mightier than ever.

This band doesn't have to talk about dynamics; they're content to feature them constantly in the playing. They play harsh and rocky one minute and soft and gentle the next. *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* conjures up amazing visual possibilities with its childlike quality of far away images. A flute comes in at the end, reminding one ever so slightly of early Traffic. Classical themes are carefully mixed with rock, highlighted by Banks' grand master piano playing and Collins' orchestral percussion on tracks like *Firth of Fifth* and *After the Ordeal*.

The Battle of Epping Forest is the one that will no doubt be a grand stage production. One can easily envisage Gabriel playing the actor as his voice changes ranges and accents – while the piece builds to a fitting crescendo. Never boring, never redundant, each piece is a minor tour de force, each played with the sensitivity and care all too often missing from popular music. The lead guitar lines change with each song, always blending in with the creative use of moogs, Mellotrons and synthesizers.

Banks makes those instruments come alive. He never reverts to easy mechanical gimmickry like so many of his contemporaries. So forget all those super-groups, all the super hype and all those mundane 'concept' albums. Disregard those Mellotron based wonders that are almost always boring. Forget all those bands that sound the same. Genesis stand head and shoulders, above all those so-called progressive groups.

Even the people upstairs like this one!"

In 1974 when *Music Scene* magazine got round to reviewing the career of Genesis to date *Selling England by the Pound* was the band's new album. Genesis were by then one of the hottest properties around and the growing influence of the band was reflected in the extensive coverage which took both the group and its music very seriously indeed:

'Until Peter Gabriel happened on the scene perhaps the eeriest thing around was Vincent Price in all manner of gruesome guises in film adaptations of Edgar Alan Poe horror stories. Then the Genesis singer put an end to all that with an act that is at best intriguing and at worst spine tingling. Gabriel has his own tame mask maker who turns out such delights as bat wings, fox's heads, illuminated geometrical hats, flowers, old men's moosh's and God knows how many other creations. As if this is not enough, Peter has perfected the knack of appearing on a darkened stage with his eyes gleaming from the blackness like Christopher Lee with a bad attack of the late-night blood lust. Theatrics play a large part in Genesis' music and it's all preconceived.

While admitting that his partially shaved head is a gimmick; Peter says: "The difference between us and other bands who are into theatrics is that when we've recorded a song we decide how best to present it onstage rather than just put on costumes which bear no particular relation to the music." Genesis are working on the idea of using cartoons to further enhance their act and in the meantime have devised a whole new performance which has recently been unleashed on the Americans.

"We are trying to create images and moods with the music and we want to use any tools at our disposal to enhance the music. We never want the visual aids to dominate the music and I don't feel it ever gets to that stage with us as it does with certain other cases. I would like to see our stage act as being strange in an introverted fashion rather than an extroverted fashion and I don't think that's a contradiction in terms.

"As long as what I'm doing is coming from what I feel rather than routine or contrived effect then I'm quite happy that it's justified."

Another idea the band has in mind is that of using a portable theatre where the audience would be involved in a fantasy during the two/three hour show, not only from the stage but via things going on around them. "We work under a fantasy and my part has been to conceive all the characters and masks I can from a piece," Peter points out. "The visuals are really just an adaptation of something that's already been written. They began out of necessity; with gaps in the playing the door was left wide open to me. Visuals can only succeed if the music is just as satisfying; it's actually a means to an end.

"Visuals should provide some images that sink into the music, so if you're listening at home you've still got traces of the characters floating around inside your head."

Genesis had definitely begun to cement their status in the US and *Rolling Stone* again featured the band in an extended piece by Richard Cromelin who in reference to Gabriel's shaven wedge of fringe entitled his piece *Genesis: Short on Hair, Long on Gimmicks Rolling Stone*, published on 28 March 1974:

"Los Angeles – Peter Gabriel's five o'clock shadow tints not only cheeks and chin but the shaved patch of flesh which cuts up from the top of his forehead into the centre of his hair, as if a tiny lawnmower had gone to work.

Will the style catch on? "There are one or two people in England who waddle about with it," he admits. "Very good for my ego. But I think it's too violent a step. I mean I'm not sure how many people would consider it an asset to their sex appeal. I think if I can link it up in the public mind with virility, success or even some occult mystical significance, then perhaps it will spring forth in abundance. But probably not.

"The gimmickry is remarkably good at getting pictures in the paper," says Gabriel, lead singer of the onrushing theatrical-rock

group, Genesis. "I'm only too happy to play that game, because I enjoy playing it. It does make a difference. It's a means to an end."

To Genesis, even their elaborate stage show is decidedly secondary to the music and falls at least partially into the attention-getting category. "I think there's enough going on on the visual side to be attractive to first-timers," Gabriel explains. "A lot of people don't get interested in the music until a desire to listen to it has been set in after they've seen some of the visual things."

Genesis' show, which has developed into a tight web of slides, costumes, props, masks, shattering explosions and highly sophisticated lighting, had its origin when the band set out on the British club circuit about five years ago and Gabriel found that the sound systems weren't conveying his words too well. "So I used to try to do some sort of mime – mime is a very grand word for waving the arms in a fashion. I would wave my hands to try to give some idea of what I was trying to sing about. The fox mask was the first time I actually took on a costume and tried to act out a character. It sort of went on from there."

Genesis' strikingly coherent parade of visual images (both amusing and unsettling) is a far cry from the chaotic melange that too often passes for rock theatre. The band's music – which ranges from melodic science-fiction space rock with mythic undercurrents to macabre twistings of Victorian fairy tales – provides ideal fodder for visual presentation. "About 1968 or 1969... we stopped writing songs that we thought could be done by other people," says Gabriel. "At that time our idea was to get a film running concurrently, rather than what we've evolved, which I suppose is more of a theatrical rip-off. We do have big visual things in mind at the time of writing, and the more we can get across what was floating around when the thing was written, the happier we are."

Genesis began as a four-man song writing team – Tony Banks, Michael Rutherford, Anthony Phillips and Gabriel. The four writers eventually hooked up with pop mastermind Jonathan King (a

Charterhouse alumnus), who sold them on the idea of doing their own material and dubbed them Genesis. King produced the first album, *From Genesis to Revelation* (on British label Decca), but the teaming ended soon after when the band broke out of the standard pop-song format.

There followed the traditional English-group country-cottage period, the traditional personnel changes (the line-up now is Banks, Rutherford, Gabriel, Phil Collins and Steve Hackett), and the traditional discouraging treks to the record companies. They were finally signed to Charisma and gained considerable popularity in Belgium, France and Italy. Then they built a following at home, first in the clubs and then on the concert trail. With the word spread in America by rimshot and Mellotron enthusiasts, Genesis recently completed its first headlining tour of the States.

Among the comments overheard after its three-day stand at LA's Roxy Night Club were: "I haven't cried at a show since I saw Nureyev dance, until now;" and a calmer, though no less enthusiastic, "This reminds me of the response Jethro Tull was getting when it was starting out." An enlightening exchange had been observed two weeks earlier, in the lobby of the Santa Monica Civic after a Hawkwind concert, where an intense-looking young man took the Genesis T-shirt off a stranger's back for $20.

Gabriel, greatly encouraged by the reaction of the audiences here and by the fact that Charisma has switched from Buddah to Atlantic as its American distributor, expects sales and fame to start picking up. It's been a long haul (six years and five fairly obscure albums) but things finally appear to have turned around. "We want, obviously," says Gabriel, "a lot more success than we have now, say in terms of record sales or whatever it is. We're alright as long as things keep advancing. The speed at which it happens isn't so important to us, provided we don't lose too much money. We used to be in a hurry to do things, but now we're not, because it seems the longer it takes things to happen, the better relationship you have with the people

that are listening to the music. I think it's a less personal thing when they're hyped, so really we've been quite happy with the pace of the thing. We've been able to play to the people as the interest has grown."

And you know, that haircut might not look too bad. If only you didn't have to shave every day... But when the group went back a second time they found they ran into complications, particularly with Lou Reed, their headliner, who proved difficult.

In Toronto Phil Collins explained that the PA was late because it was Lou's and it is the practice that top of the bill acts have their own system, "The guy that was running it didn't know what was happening, an English guy who used to do the lights for Crimson, Bruce his name is.

"Anyway Lou Reed sound checked for two hours and we were setting up with the people coming in you know. We came onstage for the performance, very dramatically. We had ultraviolet light which makes everything very peculiar and Pete wears paint which brings out the ultra-violet light round his eyes and, er, we were greeted with things like 'you'd better be bloody good man' and 'piss off'. They thought we had taken our time you know.

"So that was a bit of a fright, so all through the quiet sections we were a bit vulnerable to abuse, but then *Supper's Ready* started and they were very good and got into it."

He admitted that the tour changed them. "America does a lot to change you actually". For a band that started to become relatively established here, you go to the States and it's about ten times as big and you realise that no-one knows who the hell you are. So that has quite a devastating effect on one.

"First of all it makes you grow up a lot. You have to realise that you have to be a lot more professional.

"I think it has loosened the rest of the band up, I mean I've always liked the idea of going onstage with no fixed idea at all and just go onstage and play out of the top of your head. I wouldn't say anyone

'The only reason we're up on a stage is to communicate to people, to entertain, and you're better able to do that with movement. So whatever we can get our hands on, we'll use.'

– Peter Gabriel

has gone as far overboard with me as that but everyone's getting more into the idea of maybe changing things and loosening up onstage."

Since that American tour, Genesis have had two more albums released, *Genesis Live* and *Selling England by the Pound*, have finished another American tour in a bid to break the US market, and switched their personal management from Charisma boss Tony Stratton-Smith, who has got further into horse racing and his already time consuming record and book publishing interests, to Tony Smith, the father of the father-and-son promotion team.

Their development during 1973 is unremarkable except for their popularity which reflects in album sales (*Selling England by the Pound* – 100,000) and concert attendance. The group itself is merely consolidating its English market.

And though *Selling England by the Pound* may be selling copies it gave the group the least work. Peter Gabriel is said to have written the lyrics in two evenings and if you listen closely you'll find that much of the chord and note sequences are unvaried, particularly on the second side.

Basically, the album is more conventional in its approach lyrically, Gabriel using direct analogies (*Dancing With the Moonlit Knight* and *Firth of Fifth* particularly, but also *Aisle of Plenty*) to reiterate his doomy messages about the way our culture operates against nature (all very ecological). It also contains their very first 'straight' love song *More Fool Me* sung by Phil Collins, which talks of doubt and optimism in the face of hurt and rejection by the loved one.

That certain lack of imagination about the album, difficult to pin down, is apparent on *The Battle of Epping Forest*, a straightforward narrative with little change in rhythm or mood throughout and only a neat *Lord of the Flies* type ending to give the song a fillip.

I recommend *Selling England by the Pound* only as long as you go to see them, so that the performance of it is given the added dimension of a 'live' stage act and if you do save your money, on the *Genesis Live* release because though the mix is adequate there, it does

not overcome the sound recording problems of the big halls in which it was recorded (Manchester Free Trade and Leicester de Montfort) sufficiently to give you atmosphere or listening quality. Add to that the fact that all the tracks are on previous albums and you have an unnecessary purchase.

Despite the drawbacks though, Genesis are going to continue to be successful because they have given a lot of thought to the form of their birth. And their music is nurtured by that early upbringing, the length of time they will be successful depends very much on which they decide to concentrate on, the music or the presentation. Hopefully it will be the music."

As usual Ron Ross was one of the few music writers who was able to clearly define the position of the album in the context of Genesis' work as a whole and as we can see from this extract from his piece entitled *Genesis: The Future of Rock Theatre*, Ron was able to firmly nail the influence and position of the album into the work of Genesis as a complete body of work. Incorporated into that extensive overview are short recapitulations on the alums which had gone before. His overview of *Selling England by the Pound* neatly encapsulated the qualities of the album and looked forward to the next epic stage on the journey:

'Following *Foxtrot* was a live set that did well enough in the British charts to confirm Genesis' growing reputation as one of rock's best stage acts, with a deeply loyal following. 1973 saw Charisma switch distribution in America from Buddah to Atlantic and with that switch came *Selling England by the Pound*, Genesis' best-selling album in the States to date. While sex, money, and violence remain dominant themes, *Selling England by the Pound* is comprised of separate songs. The ensemble playing is more spacious and the arrangements make the most of Genesis' more dramatic musical devices. Banks piano is technically flawless and melodically beautiful, while in *After the Ordeal*, Hackett's solos have the authority and electric fluency of the best of Beck or Ronson.

I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe) was Genesis' first hit single in England. "What I like about that song," Gabriel has commented, "is the fact that here's a character in a rural situation where he's being dominated by the people around him. He's lacking an identity of his own. He lives a life that is preconceived by the people around him and the only time that his own identity comes out is when he's actually on the lawn, mowing the grass. I mean, I get this tremendous, physical buzz by the sensation of cutters slicing through a whole layer of grass. There's really sort of a therapeutic ultra-violence in the act of mowing the lawn." Gabriel's pantomime depiction of this "therapeutic ultra-violence" was as spine-tingling as any of Alice Cooper's baby bruising atrocities of the same period and perhaps more soundly conceived.

If *I Know What I Like* uncovers the violent underside of the underdog, *The Battle of Epping Forest* concerns the brutal exploitation of the timid. Unleashing a crew of thugs as colourfully crass and cockney as the cast of *Get 'Em Out*, *Epping* anticipates *Godfather II* by being taken "from a new story concerning two rival gangs fighting over East-End protection rights." The nearly twelve-minute-long cut is boldly ambitious as it moves from a graphic description of the two gangs to a minister who is blackmailed by the organization in promoting "pin-up gurus" as a "karamacanic" for "Love, Peace and Truth Incorporated". The Social comment is scathing and Swiftian; the music is spirited and dances lightly through an amazing array of time changes. Though in some ways less bleak than *Foxtrot*, *Selling England by the Pound* has a more morally satirical bent, and the expanded arrangements are among Genesis' most inspired and accessible. Produced by the group with John Burns, *Selling England by the Pound* also has a strikingly clear and present sound that lends the album even greater impact.

Viewed in retrospect, *Selling England by the Pound* was a transitional album for Genesis. Its songs run the gamut from the specifically British satire of *Epping Forest* to the medieval

mysticism of *Firth of Fifth*, working consistently with symbols of greed, hunger, power and passivity. The album's emphasis on these symbols fairly sums up the band's lyrical concerns before *The Lamb*. Musically, however, *Selling England by the Pound* pointed to Genesis' future. While the band had always conscientiously composed bridges between peaks, *After the Ordeal* was Genesis' first extended instrumental. The interweaving textures of Hackett and Rutherford's guitars were given much freer play, and the result is a refreshing feeling of musical release after the tension of *Epping Forest*. This structuring of tense lyrical moments, followed by more relaxed instrumental passages, would prove crucial to the pacing of a much longer work such as *The Lamb*.

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Selling England by the Pound was undoubtedly a masterpiece and to cap it all there was even a hit single, but by early 1975, Peter Gabriel was beginning to strain at the ties that bound him to Genesis, Gabriel was overflowing with musical and lyrical ideas and it was becoming apparent that something would have to give. It seems that some time in 1974, Peter Gabriel finally took the decision to leave Genesis, but before he did so Gabriel took a major part in the creation of *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. Tensions were certainly growing at this time as Gabriel wanted complete control over the lyrics and the central content of the album. In contrast to the English subject matter of the previous albums *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* told the story of a New York street punk, but not always in the most cohesive manner.

Join us again in the next issue of Music Legends Special Editions to discover how tensions within the hand rose to the surface, and affected the creation of Genesis' excellent album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*.

GENESIS

SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

MUSIC LEGENDS